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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001842

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKISH ELECTIONS: ANALYSTS ASSESS MILITARY
CONFIDENCE IN ELECTION OUTCOME

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary: Experts on civil-military relations in Ankara contend the Turkish General Staff (TGS) is satisfied with the process set in motion by its April 27 warning and the Constitutional Court's subsequent decision on the presidency vote which brought Turkey to early elections. Analysts claim that the military and pro-secular opposition parties, buoyed by mass pro-secular demonstrations in May and June, believe that even if the AKP emerges from July 22 elections able to form a single-party government, it will be forced to accept a consensus candidate for the presidency. Despite these claims of confidence, the military continues to work to exploit debate over a cross-border operation against PKK terrorists, as well as press allegations that the US is either directly or indirectly providing weapons to the PKK, to make the AKP government appear weak on security. And of course there is the possibility of a last ditch attempt by the military -- via public statements, policy maneuvering, or partisan manipulation -- to sway undecided voters towards secular opposition parties. Military reaction to the elections may be affected by the TGS's all-consuming annual exercise of the Supreme Military Council, which starts August 1. End Summary

12. (C) The crisis atmosphere following the TGS's April 27 warning, which led many to fear some kind of military intervention, has been replaced by more traditional politicking in the final stretch to July 22 national elections. After public sparring with the government in May and June over who would take responsibility for a cross-border operation against PKK terrorists in northern Iraq -- designed to show the AKP government as soft on terrorism -- the TGS has refrained from public statements on domestic political issues for the past two weeks. Chief of Defense Gen Buyukanit and Deputy CHOD Saygun enjoyed scheduled vacations on the coast in late June and early July.

13. (C) According to Ankara University professor Tanel Demirel, the TGS achieved its primary short-term objective via the April 27 announcement: preventing Abdullah Gul from becoming president and ensuring a Constitutional Court ruling raising the vote threshold for president to 367. The head of the secular and nationalist Ataturk Thought Association

(ADD), retired General Sener Eruygur, pointed to the large turn-out at pro-secular rallies in Istanbul, Izmir and other cities as proof pro-secular forces are rising to challenge the AKP.

¶4. (C) Several observers, such as Bilkent University professor and military analyst Umit Cizre, identify the pivotal moment in the AKP's relations with the military as the private May 4 meeting between PM Erdogan and CHOD Buyukanit at the Dolmabahce palace in Istanbul. Although Cizre and other analysts are not sure what happened during the 2.5 hour session, they conclude that Buyukanit and Erdogan reached some understanding. Ankara University professor Nuran Yildiz believes Buyukanit made military "red lines" over the presidency clear to Erdogan at that encounter. All agree that the situation relaxed considerably after that.

¶5. (C) Analysts' views vary widely on the significance of the military's April 27 internet warning that it was ready to intervene to protect Turkey's secular democracy. Cizre and Demirel believe the April 27 statement was both harmful and unnecessary since the Constitutional Court was poised anyway to affirm a 367 quorum requirement for the presidency and thus defeat Gul's candidacy, precipitating early elections. Yildiz and others, including retired general Riza Kucukoglu at Ankara's Eurasian Studies Institute (ASAM), assert the military has played its role correctly in counterbalancing AKP attempts to monopolize all major power centers. Even critics of the military's announcement, such as Ankara University professor Bedriye Poyraz, believe that the AKP provoked military intervention by blatant attempts to fill

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the government bureaucracy with its supporters and its ill-considered nomination of Gul for president. They acknowledge that, despite criticism of the military's intervention by some intellectuals and pundits, most Turks see it as natural, if not appropriate, for the generals to make their political views known.

¶6. (C) Looking at post-election scenarios, most observers with whom we have spoken tell us the military can live with another AKP government, as long as the president is a secular figure selected by consensus. The prospect of the AKP cooperating with independent Kurdish deputies in order to form a government is more controversial, as this would bring together the military and secular establishment's two archenemies: "Islamists and separatists." While Cizre believes the generals could tolerate an alliance of AKP and Kurdish independents as long as the president is secular, ADD's Eruygur termed such an alliance a "nightmare" for Turkey. ASAM's Kucukoglu asserted that the military would be uncomfortable with independent Kurdish MPs, citing their past behavior (in the early 1990s, the previous iteration of pro-Kurdish MPs attempted to take the parliamentary oath in Turkish and made statements that triggered the lifting of their parliamentary immunity and eventual prosecution). He claimed, however, that military coups are no longer necessary, now that the majority of Turks who favor secularism have found their voice.

¶7. (C) Comment: Despite analysts' claims of military confidence, the generals are clearly working behind the scenes, using ongoing PKK terrorism and the debate over the necessity of a cross-border operation into northern Iraq to portray the AKP as weak on terrorism. We also detect the military's hand behind recent allegations that the U.S. has, either directly or indirectly, provided weapons to the PKK in northern Iraq. This is also designed to weaken AKP's national security credentials and encourage undecided voters to turn to "tougher" pro-secular parties. While the military could roil the waters and make a public statement on the elections at any time, its post-election reaction may be delayed by the August 1 start of annual, and all-consuming, Supreme Military Council (YAS) promotions and assignments

deliberations. End Comment.

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